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Ministry of Forests and Range

MUD BOGGING, INTERFACE FIRES TARGETED IN BILL

VICTORIA – Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman today introduced the Forests and Range Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, which will deliver on throne speech commitments to strengthen forest stewardship and reduce the risk of forest fires, as well as helping to build government's New Relationship with First Nations.

"We are strengthening government's ability to deal with people who damage our forest or range resources," said Coleman. "This should serve as notice that we will not tolerate the actions of those who wilfully run machines through sensitive areas."

Under new provisions of the Forest and Range Practices Act, people causing damage that adversely affects an ecosystem, such as driving four-wheel drive vehicles in wetlands, or riding ATVs irresponsibly in alpine terrain or range lands, will face penalties of up to $100,000. Cases prosecuted in the criminal courts carry maximum fines of $100,000, up to one year in jail, or both.

Bill 18 also contains provisions to other statutes, including the Forest Act, Wildfire Act, Range Act and Forestry Revitalization Act to:

- enable local governments to reduce the threat of interface wildfires to their communities through changes to the Forestry Licence to Cut;
- streamline government's ability to increase the volume and area of a First Nation tenure, and to protect potential Aboriginal rights and title;
- provide woodlot operators with greater operational flexibility to improve their economic stability; and
- make changes to provisions governing cutting permits to facilitate the prompt harvesting of mountain pine beetle-attacked timber.

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